

religious persons to refuse to go on, to renounce
luxurious novel-
ties, and to prefer the older and inferior ways.
677. Ike ascetic philosophy. Here then we
have a life phi-
losophy, or a life standpoint, from which the
things to be done
are presented inverted. It is ill luck, loss,
calamity, etc., which
have inverted human nature. The element of
luck crossed and
cut off the relations between effort and satisfaction,
and disturbed
all the lessons of industry. All effort would be vain
if the ghosts
who control luck were not propitiated. If they
were friendly,
labor was of no importance. Self-discipline,
therefore, entered
into everything. This is asceticism. It is
always irrational or
magical, addressed directly or remotely to the
superior powers,
as an appeal to their will and favor, their mystical
friendship,
and a prayer for the transcendental
communications which they
give. Pater⁷ says that asceticism is a sacrifice
of one part of
human nature to another, that the latter may
survive; or a
harmonious development of all parts to realize an
ideal of culture.
If the first sentence of this statement could be
accepted as a
fair definition, the second cannot. Asceticism
does not aim at
a harmonious development and never could produce
it. It selects
purposes and pushes towards their
accomplishment. The selec-
tion has often been made with the purpose to
attain to holiness,
or a higher realization of religious ideals. The
ideals are neces-
sarily arbitrary and are very sure to be
extravagant. They do
not have good effect on character, and they
produce moral dis-
tortion. They are, however, an outflow of
honest religious
emotion.
678. Asceticism is only an aberration. The great
viewpoints
and the great world philosophies are found logically

at the end of
a long study of life, if anywhere. If one is found or
adopted, it fur-
nishes leading for the notions of ways to be
employed in all details
of life. This is equally true if it is reached on a
slight, superficial,
or superstitious view of life. The ascetic
philosophy produces
contradiction and confusion in the acts of men,
because some of
them work for expediency and others for
inexpediency at the
same time. Therefore also the mores, if they
are affected by

¹ *Marius the Epicurean*, 357.